DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 398 943 JC 960 184

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TITLE Perspectives and Perceptions: A Review of the Literature on the Use of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adjunct Faculty; *Community Colleges; Educational Trends; *Employment Practices; *Faculty Development; Literature Reviews; Part Time Employment; *Part Time Faculty; *Teacher Attitudes; Two Year Colleges; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Although part-time faculty are found in all of higher education, they are especially prevalent in two-year colleges, with a 1993 study finding that 65% of two-year college faculty were employed part-time. Since the 1980's, considerable research has been conducted on issues related to the use of part-time faculty in community colleges, such as their working conditions and needs and, most commonly, suggestions for improving part-time faculty instruction. Part-time faculty are employed for a variety of reasons, including to save institutions money, increase institutional flexibility regarding enrollment demands, and bring "real-world" experience to the classroom. However, critics of the use of part-timers argue that they harm full-time faculty by taking away full-time positions and jeopardize the integrity of the teaching profession since many part-timers are employed for their professional rather than their pedagogical skills. Much of the research that has been conducted makes reference to negative attitudes toward part-time faculty held by full-time faculty and administrators. However, there is little data in the research to support these attitudes, with several studies concluding that there is no difference in the quality of instruction delivered by full- and part-time faculty. Although attempts are being made to deter community colleges from employing part-time faculty, the colleges will suffer economically and pedagogically if these attempts are successful. Contains 50 references. (HAA)

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Perspectives and Perceptions: A Review of the Literature on the Use of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges

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Perspectives and Perceptions: A Review of the Literature on the Use of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges

ABSTRACT

Despite the historical role played by part-time faculty in community colleges, research on the topic is relatively new. This study examines the literature on the use of part-time faculty in two-year colleges available since the late 1980's in the ERIC collection. A significant amount of the literature makes reference to the perceptions of faculty, administrators, and part-timers themselves regarding the use of part-time faculty in community colleges. Often, the perceptions reflect negative attitudes toward the part-time faculty status. To date, it appears that there is a limited amount of data cited in the ERIC collection to substantiate these perceptions. Based on unsubstantiated claims that the use of part-time faculty by community colleges for the delivery of instruction poses more harm than good, efforts are being made to deter their employment. If these efforts succeed, community colleges will suffer as they loose a valuable pool of educators.

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PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTIONS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE USE OF PART-TIME FACULTY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Introduction

Hierarchical stratification is a dominant characteristic of the faculty structure in American higher education and indicative of the modern academic career track. At universities and four-year colleges faculty rank is assumed to parallel scholarship and academic expertise. The professor emeritus, professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and instructor status indicate one's position in the faculty stratum. With the exception of the professor emeritus, community colleges have a similar hierarchy. At universities, four-year colleges, and community colleges, adjuncts or part-time faculty occupy the lowest level of the faculty structure. Consequently, they assume a position considered significantly lower in prestige and level of expertise than that of full-time faculty.

Though prevalent in American higher education, the highest proportion of part-time faculty is found in two-year colleges. A national survey of 25,780 college faculty and 872 institutions investigated patterns in race, part- and full-time employment, disciplines, academic rank, and institution type. Overall, one-third of the respondents work part-time, with the highest proportion in community colleges (Wilson, 1994).

The last 15 years are characterized by steady growth in the use of part-time faculty in community colleges. In 1978, The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) reported that part-timers comprised more than one-half of all faculty in two-year colleges (Leslie, Kellams, & Gunne, 1982, p. 19). In 1980, nearly 60% of the faculty in two-year colleges were employed part-time, 63% in 1990, and 65% in 1993 (National Center for Education Statistics in American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 1995-1996). Today,

community colleges are becoming increasingly dependent on the use of part-time faculty. It is certain that this trend will continue.

Despite the historical role played by part-time instructors in community colleges, research on the topic is relatively new. A preliminary review of the literature reveals a limited amount of research conducted prior to the late 1980's regarding the use of part-time faculty in community colleges. Among the most commonly cited investigations is Howard Tuckman's (1978) ground-breaking study on the diversity of employment experiences and accompanying taxonomy of part-timers. Leslie et al, (1982) provides additional scholarship on the characteristics and use of part-time faculty based on Tuckman's Taxonomy.

A review of the research conducted since the late 1980's yields a substantial amount of literature on the topic of part-time faculty in community colleges. Most of the investigations are cited in the ERIC collection and are available through the ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges. Several of the studies focus on the following areas: the use of part-time faculty; characteristics of part-time faculty; evaluation of part-time faculty, including performance, effectiveness, and quality of instruction; working conditions and needs of part-time faculty; and most common, suggestions for improving part-time faculty instruction. A significant amount of the literature makes reference to the perceptions of full-time faculty, administrators, and part-time faculty themselves regarding the use of part-time faculty in community colleges. Often, the perceptions reflect negative attitudes toward the part-time faculty status. Part-time faculty are referred to as "the academic underclass" (Benjet & Loweth, 1989), "a corps of unregulated personnel" (The National Education Association in McGuire, 1993, p. 2), "hopeful full-timers" (Tuckman, 1978), "anchorless street-corner men" (Franklin, Laurence, & Denham, 1988), "M.I.A.'s" (Heinzelman, 1986), "gypsy scholars" (Reed, 1985, p. 41), and "invisible and expendable" (Wallace, 1984). Additionally, the use of

part-time faculty in community colleges is described as a "necessary evil", "cheap fix", "dangerous addiction", and an "exploitation of the worse kind" (McGuire, 1993, p. 2). To date, it appears that there is a limited amount of data cited in the ERIC collection to substantiate negative perceptions regarding the use of part-time faculty for the delivery of instruction in community colleges.

This paper provides a brief review of the literature on the topic of part-time faculty in community colleges published since the late 1980's in the ERIC collection. Specifically, this paper examines perceptions regarding the use of part-time faculty in two-year institutions of higher learning and discusses the available, or lack of, data to support these perceptions.

Part-Time Faculty as the Majority

The number of part-time instructors in two-year colleges has grown steadily since the early 1960's, with the most dramatic growth occurring over the last 8 years. According to Lombardi (1992, p. 55), part-time instructors comprised 38.5% of the instructors in 698 junior colleges in 1962. He further reported that by 1971 this number increased moderately to 40%, and three years later grew to nearly 50%. Between 1975 and 1983, approximately two new part-time positions were created for every new full-time position (Spangler, 1990).

Based on data drawn from a 1989-90 national survey of 35,478 full-time faculty at 392 colleges and universities conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a 1988 national survey of 7,408 full-and part-time faculty at 449 colleges and universities conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics in Washington, D.C., Carter and Ottinger (1992) found that 58% of two-year college faculty were employed on a part-time basis.

As reported by Cohen (1992), adjunct instructors make-up 63% of community college faculty nationwide. Recent statistics on the number of part-time faculty in community colleges indicate that Cohen's estimate has risen to 65% (AACC, 1995-96). Some community colleges exceed the national average. At Valencia Community College's Osceola campus, for example, adjunct instructors make-up over 75% of the teaching force (Williamson & Mulholland, 1993). Likewise, part-time faculty at Pima Community College (PCC) account for 80% of the total faculty on a head-count basis (Iadevaia, 1991).

Nagy (1993) cautions that statistics on the number of part-time faculty employed by post-secondary institutions of education, especially community colleges, are misleading. He suggest that the state and national figures do not consider teaching loads of full- and part-time faculty, an important indicator of instruction on campus. A college may have a majority of part-time instructors and still have substantially more than a majority of instruction delivered by full-time faculty. For example, he found that in the fall of 1991, 79% of the North Carolina Community College System's (NCCCS) part-time faculty taught nine credit hours or less, while 89% of full-time faculty taught 10 credit hours or more. Further, he argues that both the state and national figures cloak the broad variations found within a large community college system. In 1992, the proportion of full-time faculty in the individual colleges in the NCCCS ranged from 23% to 85%. Between 1988 and 1992, 28 of the 58 community colleges in the NCCCS had an increase in the proportions of full-time faculty, with half of the increases being 5 percentage points or less and half being 6 percentage points or more.

Employing Part-Timers: Advantages and Disadvantages

Part-time faculty are employed in community colleges for a variety of reasons. First, part-time faculty save an institution money. Within an environment of shrinking financial resources, institutions of higher education are forced to seek alternative methods for the delivery of costly services (Avakian, 1995; Monroe & Denman, 1991; Osborn, 1990; Selvadurai, 1990). Adjunct faculty are less costly than full-time faculty in both salaries and benefits. They are paid one-third of the salary of full-time professors, have limited rights to raises, and are rarely promoted to higher-paid, more prestigious positions (Twigg, 1989). Additionally, they cost the college virtually nothing in terms of sick leave, pension rights, and health-care insurance (Mangan, 1991).

Second, the use of part-time faculty in community colleges increases institutional flexibility in matching the demands of varying enrollments (Lankard, 1993; McGuire, 1993; Osborn, 1990). Adjuncts are contracted to teach at the beginning of each quarter and must be renewed before securing employment for following quarters, therefore when matriculation drops, the number of part-time faculty are easily adjusted without much concern about bureaucratic red-tape.

Third, part-time faculty are advantageous because they bring "real world vocational experience" to the community college environment (Cline, 1993, p. 26; Cohen, 1992; Littrell, 1990). Proponents of this argument contend that part-time faculty enrich academic preparation for the professions. Phelan (1986) notes the contributions of practicing professionals who are used extensively to teach in the fields of engineering and architecture at the Pratt Institute as follows: "The value and value-adding roles of professionals who are part-time faculty are most apparent when it is understood that they are a primary source by which appropriate norms, values, and information are inserted directly into the curriculum" (p. 8). Further, he believes that "by bringing professionals into

teaching roles, the Pratt Institute has eased the transition of its students into the world of practice" (Phelan in Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 122). McGuire (1993) adds that community colleges benefit from the use of adjunct faculty simply because they are talented, good teachers who are generally motivated to teach. Therefore, they are committed to teaching. Several other studies offer discussion on the advantages of employing part-time faculty for the delivery of instruction at community colleges (Avakian, 1995; Kelly, 1990; Roderer & Weissbecker, 1990; Selvadurai, 1990; Spangler, 1990).

In addition to the positive attitudes of administrators and full-time faculty toward part-timers, adjunct faculty provide insight. According to Reed (1985), "professionals in fields other than teaching are grateful for being able to teach part-time because of the prestige and fulfillment it adds to their work lives" (p. 40). Likewise, a questionnaire administered by Cohen (1992) to 149 adjunct faculty members at Prince George's Community College in Maryland revealed that personal satisfaction and acquiring teaching experience for career purposes were their primary reason for doing adjunct teaching. Further, adjuncts see part-time work as a method by which to secure full-time employment. A study conducted at Pima Community College (PCC) to determine current practices and perceptions regarding the utilization of part-time faculty found that over 50% of the part-timer respondents indicated that they would apply for a full-time position in their subject area if one were to become available (Silvers, 1990). Likewise, a survey of 116 adjunct faculty at the College of the Canyons (CC) in Valencia, California, revealed that 62.5% of the 108 respondents hoped to teach full-time (CC, 1993).

Without a doubt, community colleges are increasingly dependent on the instructional use of part-time faculty. Although recent research suggest that the incentives for employing part-timers are obviously strong, critics contend that the costs of employing the majority of faculty on a part-time basis far outweigh any

benefits. First, critics argue that the increasing part-time faculty harm full-time faculty by taking away full-time positions and extra pay for course overloads (Twigg, 1989). The reality of this argument will become apparent as more and more full-time faculty leave the profession. In 1988, The Commission on the Future of Community Colleges stated that "within the next twelve years, approximately 40 percent of all community college faculty who now teach will retire" (p.12). It is almost certain that community colleges will respond by hiring many new part-time faculty to fill the vacancies caused by retirement (Engleberg, 1993; Mangan, 1991).

Second, there is concern that the integrity of the two-year college teaching profession is severally undermined when the majority of participants are in the field only part of the time. Clark (1988) contends that the widespread use of adjuncts is "a disaster for the professoriate...Nothing *de* professionalizes an occupation faster and more thoroughly than the transformation of full-time posts into part-time labor" (p. 9). According to Lankard (1993), part-time faculty are employed primarily for their professional competence rather than their pedagogical training, therefore many lack the teaching skills and teaching experience required in the classroom. Conversely, Kelly (1991) argues that part-timers are typically specialized experts in their chosen occupation. She found that although they may average lower degree attainment and lower levels of preparation for teaching, part-timers rank higher than full-timers in other professional qualifications. In many cases non-academic experience can be valuable in nearly all instructional areas. Certainly, scholarship is attained not only through academic experience, but non-academic experience as well. Due to a limited amount of empirical evidence on the subject, much research is needed to determine whether or not job experience may be a substitute for academic training.

Accompanying the forgoing critical discussion, is the argument that the extensive use of adjuncts at community colleges undermines academic integrity because it leads to differentiated teaching services (Thompson, 1992; Samuel, 1989). Research suggest that the overuse of part-timers leads to differentiated teaching because part-time faculty rely on traditional pedagogy. Therefore, they often fail to incorporate new methods of teaching (Digranes & Digranes, 1995). Kelly (1990) conducted a study at Fullerton College in California to determine the variety and scope of teaching methods used by faculty. Among her major findings was that although part-timers used a variety of teaching methods, 93% used the traditional lecture method.

Conversely, data drawn from a national study of professional development programs for two-year college faculty regarding part-time faculty perceptions indicates that part-time faculty experience virtually the same methods of delivery through professional development activities (Kelly, 1992; Impara, Hoerner, Clowes, & Alkins, 1991). Recent studies show not only that part- and full-time faculty use similar methods for the delivery of instruction, but that they share other commonalities as well. Rhodes (1991) found a number of similarities between part-time faculty, deans, division directors, and department heads in the identification of high and low teaching priorities. In her study, a survey was mailed to two groups: part-time faculty who had taught at least one quarter at Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) in the 1989-90 school year and instructional leaders defined as deans, division directors, and department heads. Seven areas were defined by both groups as top priorities. They include determining course goals, using a variety of teaching methods, and clearly defining performance objectives for the learner. Similarities between both groups were also seen in areas rated as the lowest priority. These include being familiar with the NMC library, having computer skills, and utilizing stress management skills.

Additional concern is voiced by critics who contend that differentiated teaching results in part-time faculty being less effective teachers than full-time faculty. Statistics collected from reading and writing examinations given at Los Angeles Valley College show that students taught by part-timers do not perform as well as students taught by full-timers (Spangler, 1990). Concerns over differentiated teaching services are further validated by studies such as the one conducted by Fedler (1989). Based on an examination of the number of adjuncts hired by three colleges and a comparison of the grades faculty members assigned to students, he found that adjuncts at all three schools awarded the highest grades. Fedler's study suggest that part-time faculty may inflate grades, and consequently, the students whom they teach may actually learn less than students taught by full-time instructors. Though a subjective letter grade is not necessarily indicative of academic performance, overall discrepancies between full-and part-time faculty in the evaluation of student performance does raise a legitimate concern. At the same time, what is the concern? Are part-time faculty "easier" on and less demanding of students? Or are adjuncts more effective than full-timers in helping students meet course objectives? If the later is true, perhaps more research is needed to address the quality of instruction delivered by full-time faculty.

Despite the aforementioned studies there seems to be a limited amount of evidence to support the contention that part-time instructors are less effective teachers than full-time instructors (McGuire, 1993; Lombardi 1992). In fact, several studies conclude that there is virtually no difference in the quality of instruction delivered by part- and full-time faculty. Sworder (1987) conducted a study at Saddleback College to compare student preference levels for full-time instructors with those for part-time instructors. Though the guiding purpose of his study was not to compare the delivery of instruction by full-timers to that of part-timers, he found that there was no question that the latter provided a quality of

instruction equal to that of the former. Further, the results of a study conducted by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges (CCC's) to examine current policies and practices regarding the use of part-time faculty in the CCCs, faculty characteristics, implications for instructional quality, and policy options reveal that evidence regarding differences in the quality of instruction provided by full- and part-time faculty was inconclusive (CCCs, 1987). At Pima Community College, a study was conducted comparing the characteristics of full- and part-time faculty. In addition, student grades were examined to determine whether being taught by a full-or part-time faculty member affected student success. Major findings revealed that there were no differences in student success rates for full- and part-time faculty in general (Iadevaia, 1991). Bolge (1995) confirmed these findings. Based on students' pre- and post-test scores on the mathematics subtest of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test (NJCBSPT) at Mercer County Community College in Trenton, New Jersey, he found no significant difference between the amount of learning of students taught by full-time and part-time faculty.

Third, critics claim that adjuncts themselves suffer as a result of the overuse of part-time faculty for the delivery of instruction. Monroe and Denman (1991) argue that part-time faculty roles are unclear, and as a result, adjunct faculty experience considerable role ambiguity. They suggest that role ambiguity is associated with depressed levels of role performance. Consequently, part-timers often exhibit substandard role behavior. Additionally, Monroe and Denman contend that "those in ambiguous roles have been found to be less satisfied with their job as well as less committed to, and more likely to terminate their association with, the organization" (p. 57). Responses from a questionnaire administered to 149 adjunct faculty members at Prince George's Community College in Maryland revealed that adjuncts feel the need for a greater sense of belonging to the

institution (Cohen, 1992). According to McGuire (1993), part-time faculty roles are unclear because "to often, colleges fail to integrate part-time faculty into their institutions. A 1982 study found that only 31 percent of community colleges provide a formal orientation for their part-time faculty. More needs to be done" (p. 3). McGuire's observation is validated by recent research. According to a survey receiving 878 responses from 1,252 community/technical colleges, 708 have professional development programs, but 48% rarely offer programs to part-time faculty; funding was available for full-time faculty development, but 74% had no funding for part-time faculty development (Hoerner, 1991).

According to Twigg (1989), part-timers are vulnerable to exploitation because they are paid low-wages, "there is a gross injustice and outrageous hypocrisy in the pretense of professional equality when adjuncts are paid one-third of the salary of full-time professors" (p. 3). Further, she contends that part-time faculty have no guarantee of continued employment from quarter to quarter, no health insurance, raises, opportunities for promotions, nor voice in decisions that affect them. Likewise, Lankard (1993) identifies the frustrating aspects of part-time employment, including low salaries, lack of health insurance and other benefits, and lack of negotiation power regarding raises and promotions. Curzon-Brown (1988), in fact, indicts the system "that keeps caring, competent part-time teachers from earning a living wage and joining the 'system' of job stability" (p. 195).

In some cases, adjuncts express concern about their apparently inferior academic status. Kelly (1991) conducted a study during the fall 1988 semester at Fullerton College. Responses from three-hundred and fourteen out of three-hundred and seventy-one part-time faculty who were surveyed reveal that they felt as thought they are treated as second class citizens. A study was conducted by Pollington (1992) to compare the working conditions of part-time English teachers at Brigham Young University (BYU) and Utah Valley Community College (UVCC).

Part-time instructors were surveyed concerning their job satisfaction. The results of the survey revealed that the majority of part-time instructors did not feel they were not adequately compensated, respected and valued by the administration nor their departments. A significant number of the respondents also felt that administration policies on hiring, benefits and advancement were not equitable. In fact, the respondents reported that they often felt exploited by the university or community college. The author concluded that the responses of part-time faculty at BYC and UVCC are representative of the feelings of part-timers nationwide. Bethke & Nelson (1994) collected sample essays written by full-time faculty with experience as adjuncts to examine their experiences and perceptions of the adjuncts' status. A significant percent of the essays reveal negative perceptions regarding the respondents earlier part-time faculty status.

Part-timers teaching in community colleges may experience feelings of inferiority due not only to their part-time status, but as a result of teaching part-time at a community college verses a four-year college or university. The aforementioned study by Pollington (1992) revealed that part-timers at UVCC receive no office space, telephones, or computers, and the per-credit wage is approximately two-and-a-half times lower than BYU. The author concluded that the comparison of BYC and UVCC reflect nationwide differences between part-timers at four-year and two-year institutions (Pollington, 1992).

Conclusions

Given the steady increase in the percent of part-time faculty teaching at community colleges since the 1960's, coupled with negative attitudes regarding their use, attempts are being made to deter community colleges from employing them. These efforts informally appear in the general environment of academe, and formally in state laws, institutional policies, and collective bargaining

agreements. According to McGuire (1993), the 1988 Commission on the Future of Community Colleges reported "that the increasing numbers of part-time faculty at many colleges [is] a disturbing trend", and urged "that the unrestrained expansion of part-time faculty be avoided" (p. 1). The Future's Commission recommended that "a majority of credits awarded by a community college should be earned in classes taught by full-time faculty" (p. 1). Additionally, he notes that a report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recommended "that no more than 25% of the faculty be made-up of part-timers" (p.1). He goes on to cite a 1988 California law that legislates staffing ratios of 70% full-time and 30% part-time faculty (p. 1).

As a manifest function of retaining the distinction between the full- and part-time status, most institutions are encouraged to limit the number of hours that a part-timer may teach (Samuel, 1989). A latent outcome of this distinction promptly determines who has rights to health and retirement benefits, and opportunities for pay raises and promotions. Collective bargaining agreements often follow the standard that no part-time instructor should be given teaching assignments that exceed the minimum contractual limitations on full-time faculty teaching loads. Such agreements typically restrict adjuncts to one or two courses per quarter, an average of two to six hours per week (Lombardi, 1992, pp. 54-55).

Concomitant with attempts to deter community colleges from employing part-timers are attempts to discourage potential part-time faculty from seeking employment at two-year colleges. What person would be motivated to work in a position characterized by low pay; no benefits, opportunities for advancement, or assurance of job security; and no rights to participate in the decisions that affect them? What person would be motivated to occupy a position perceived to be that of an inferior "appendage" to the college teaching profession?

Attempts to curtail the employment of part-time faculty in community colleges causes great concern, especially since these efforts are being made on the basis of unsubstantiated claims that the use of part-time faculty in community colleges causes more harm than good. With the loss of part-time faculty, colleges not only suffer economically, but pedagogically as well. When a valuable pool of talented professionals are forced to leave the classroom they will take with them one of the historically fundamental purposes of two-year institutions of higher learning, that is, to provide a practical education. Perhaps of even greater concern is that part-timers themselves will suffer as they leave the classroom without being recognized as valuable participants in the American system of higher learning.

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